

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1 1. A central server configured to promote products over a computer
2 network comprises:
 - 3 a processor configured to receive a specification of a promotion for a product
4 from a first computer, configured to create an electronic incentive in response to the
5 specification, configured to transfer the electronic incentive to an application server across
6 the computer network, the application server coupled to a merchant server, configured to
7 receive usage data of the electronic incentive from the application server, the usage data
8 determined in response to a promotion usage condition indicated by the merchant server, and
9 configured to generate a report in response to the usage data;
 - 10 a memory coupled to the processor, the memory configured to store the
11 electronic incentive, configured to store the usage data, and configured to store the report;
12 wherein data associated with the electronic incentive is transferred from the
13 application server to the merchant server;
14 wherein the merchant server specifies rendering of the data associated with the
15 electronic incentive; and
16 wherein the promotion usage condition is indicated in the merchant server
17 when a user coupled thereto fulfills requirements of the electronic incentive.
- 1 2. The central server of claim 1 wherein the electronic incentive
2 comprises an offer selected from the group: cents off, percent discount, price point, buy X get
3 Y free, solution selling, promotion content.
- 1 3. The central server of claim 1 wherein the electronic incentive
2 comprises a delivery method selected from the group: non-targeted, targeted category,
3 targeted usage, targeted brand, targeted market.
- 1 4. The central server of claim 3 wherein the electronic incentive
2 comprises a tracking code.
- 1 5. The central server of claim 3 wherein the electronic incentive
2 comprises calendar data selected from the group: effective date, expiration date.
- 1 6. The central server of claim 3 wherein the electronic incentive
2 comprises a network computer address.

1 7. The central server of claim 4 wherein the usage data from the
2 application server comprises data selected from the group: demographic data of the user, a
3 geographic indicator of the user, a number of products purchased by the user, currency value
4 of products purchased by the user, a list of products purchased by the user, the tracking code.

1 8. A merchant server coupled to a client system comprises:
2 a processor configured to request promotions from an application server
3 coupled to the merchant server, configured to receive a description of a promotion from the
4 application server, the description including pre-conditions and a user benefit, configured to
5 determine an output representation of the promotion in response to the description of the
6 promotion, configured to transmit the output representation of the description to a client
7 system for display to a user, configured to receive a selection of at least one item from the
8 client system, configured to transmit the selection of the at least one item to the application
9 server, configured to receive an indication that the user is provided with the user benefit from
10 the application server, and configured to store in a log a record that the user is provided with
11 the user benefit; and

12 a memory coupled to the processor, the memory configured to store the
13 description of the promotion, configured to store the selection of the at least one item.

1 9. The merchant server of claim 8 wherein the user benefit is selected
2 from the class: cents off, percent discount, price point, buy X get Y free, solution selling,
3 promotion content.

1 10. The merchant server of claim 8 wherein the processor is configured to
2 receive the description when the user meets target criteria, the target criteria being selected
3 from the class: targeted user, targeted user demographic, targeted user usage, targeted user
4 brand, targeted user market.

1 11. The merchant server of claim 8 wherein the pre-conditions are selected
2 from the class: purchase of an item, purchase of a quantity of an item, purchase of at least two
3 different items.

1 12. The merchant server of claim 8 wherein the processor is configured to
2 determine a category of items for display for the client system, and configured to request
3 promotions from the application server in response to the category of items.

1 13. The merchant server of claim 8 wherein the processor is also
2 configured to transmit a plurality of items to the client system for display, and configured to
3 request promotions from the application server in response to the plurality of items.

1 14. The merchant server of claim 8 wherein the processor is also
2 configured to receive a selection of a trigger item from the client system, and configured to
3 request promotions from the application server in response to the trigger item.

1 15. An application server comprises:
2 a processor configured to receive an electronic incentive from a central server,
3 the electronic incentive including a pre-condition and a benefit, configured to receive a
4 request from a merchant server for electronic incentives, configured to provide a description
5 of the electronic incentive to the merchant server in response to the request, the description
6 including a description of the pre-condition and the benefit, configured to receive from the
7 merchant server a selection by a user of at least one item, configured to determine whether
8 the selection of the one item fulfills the pre-condition, and configured to provide the
9 merchant server with the benefit when the selection of the one item fulfills the pre-condition;
10 a memory coupled to the processor configured to store the electronic
11 incentive, and configured to store a record that the electronic incentive has been used, when
12 the selection of the one item fulfills the pre-condition.

1 16. The application server of claim 15 wherein the request from the
2 merchant server also includes a description of a shopping category of a user.

1 17. The application server of claim 15 wherein the request from the
2 merchant server also includes an indicator of items previously selected by the user or
3 currently displayed to the user.

1 18. The application server of claim 15 wherein the pre-condition
2 comprises purchase of the one item.

1 19. The application server of claim 15 wherein the request from the
2 merchant server also includes an identifier of the user.

1 20. The application server of claim 15 wherein the processor is also
2 configured to forward the record that the electronic incentive has been used to a centralized
3 server.

1 21. The application server of claim 15 wherein the application server and
2 the merchant server are co-located.